

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /071 W
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R 120710Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3822
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 1271

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, BG, IN, BM
SUBJECT: BANGLADESH ARMY BRIEFING ON MISCREANT ACTIVITIES

REF: 76 DACCA 4054

1. SUMMARY: I WAS INVITED MARCH 10 BY CHIEF OF THE
GERNRAL STAFF BRIGADIER MANZUR FOR A BRIEFING ON THE
BORDER SITUATION AND "MISCREANT" ACTIVITIES. MANZUR,
IN ADDITION TO THE ORAL BIREFING, PRESENTED ME WITH TWO
DOCUMENTS WHICH DETAIL THE BANGLADESHI VIEW OF
ACTIVITIES IN THE INDIAN BORDER AREA (AN UPDATE OF THAT
REFERRED TO IN REFTEL) AND IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS.
MANZUR SAID THE SUPPORT BY INDIA HAD BEEN DECLINING BUT
THAT IT WAS STILL A SERIOUS MATTER IN THE AREA FACING
MEGHALAYA IN INDIA AND A THREAT IN THE AREA OPPOSITE

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TRIPURA. HE ADDED THAT THE MOST DANGEROUS REGION AT
THE MOMENT WAS THE HILL TRACTS WHERE A MIXTURE OF
INDIAN AND BURMESE DISSIDENTS AND DISAFFECTED BANGLADESHI
TRIBALS WAS MAKING A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION FOR THE
BANGLADESHI MILITARY FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. BRIGADIER M.Z. MANZUR, CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF,

BANGLADESH ARMY (CGS), BRIEFED ME ON THE BORDER SITUATION MARCH 10. MANZUR MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WAS DOING SO UNDER THE INSTRUCTIONS OF GENERAL ZIA AND WOULD BE BRIEFING AS WELL HEADS OF MISSION OF SEVERAL OTHER "FRIENDLY" COUNTRIES. TWO CLASSIFIED REPORTS (SEE BELOW) WERE PRESENTED. THESE WILL BE SENT UNDER COVER OF AN AIRGRAM TO THE DEPARTMENT ALONG WITH A MORE COMPLETE MEMCON FOR DISTRIBUTION BY THE DEPARTMENT TO OTHER ADDRESSEES.

3. MANZUR'S "HISTORICAL BACKGROUND" CONTAINED NO COMMENTS THAT WERE UNEXPECTED. HE SAID THAT FROM 1947, INDIA HAD SEEN PAKISTAN MOST VULNERABLE IN THE EAST AND DESIRED TO DETACH EAST BENGAL FROM THE UNITED COUNTRY. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN 1971, WITH INDIAN AID, WHICH MANZUR SAID WAS VERY MUCH APPRECIATED, BUT DIFFICULTIES SOON BEGAN TO APPEAR BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THIS OCCURRED LONG BEFORE THE FALL OF MUJIB, BUT THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN AUGUST 1975, WAS SEEN BY INDIA AS A SETBACK TO INDIAN OBJECTIVES IN BANGLADESH. INDIA THEN BEGAN TO SUPPORT GROUPS DISAFFECTED WITH THE REGIMES WHICH SUCCEEDED MUJIB IN THE HOPE OF REESTABLISHING A CLIENT REGIMES HERE. MANZUR SAID THERE HAD BEEN A DECLINE IN INDIAN SUPPORT TO DISSIDENT ELEMENTS SINCE MARCH 1976, BUT ASSISTANCE CONTINUES AND IT IS OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO THE BDG.

4. ACCORDING TO MANZUR, THE WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER, SIDDHARTHA SHANKAR RAY, RESISTED THE USE OF TERRITORY
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IN THAT STATE AS A SIGNIFICANT BASE AGAINST BANGLADESH BOTH BECAUSE RAY SAW THE OPERATION SUPPORTED BY THE YOUTH CONGRESS, WHOSE LEADER SANJAY GANDHI HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO ABET, AND AS THE TERRITORY OF WEST BENGAL WAS OPEN TO FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC OBSERVERS IN A WAY THAT IS NOT TRUE OF MEGHALAYA AND TRIPURA.

5. MANZUR ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT THE BDG DOES NOT BELIEVE THE INDIAN ARMY ITSELF IS INVOLVED, BUT THAT THE OPERATIONS ARE RUN BY THE INDIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES. HE REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO THE RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS WING (RAW) (AN ADJUNCT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), WHICH, HE SAID, HAS ALSO ENLISTED THE COOPERATION OF THE BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF) AND CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE (CRP).

6. WITH REGARD TO INDIAN-SPONSORED ACTIVITY, MANZUR SAID THE ACTIONS WERE CONTINUING IN MYMENSINGH AND TANGAIL DISTRICTS WHERE KADER "TIGHER" SIDDIQI AND HIS

SELF-STYLED LIBERATION ARMY WERE OPERATING WITH INDIAN SUPPORT. THE INDIANS HAVE TRIED TO BUILD UP SIDDIQI AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PPRESENT GOVERNMENT, BUT HE HAS FAILED TO GAIN SUPPORT LOCALLY, ALTHOUGH WITH INDIAN ASSISTANCE HE IS CAPABLE OF HIT AND RUN TERRORISM. AN APPENDIX TO THE DOCUMENT ON THE MEGHALAYA/TRIPURA BORDER AREA INDICATED 24 BANGLADESHI MILITARY AND 336 CIVILIANS HAD BEEN KILLED, WITH 211 "MISCREANTS" KILLED BY BD DEFENSE FORCES.

7. HOWEVER, MANZUR SAID THE MYMENSINGH-TANGAIL AREA IS OF LESS CONCERN TO THE BDG AT PRESENT THAN THE COMILLA AREA FACING TRIPURA STATE IN INDIA. SO FAR THERE HAVE NOT BEEN MAJOR OPERATIONS IN COMILLA AND NEIGHBORING AREAS, BUT THE BANGLADESHIS ARE AWARE OF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF INDIAN-SUPPORTED CAMPS ACROSS THE BORDER. THE COMILLA AREA IS THE "LIFELINE OF BANGLADESH" WITH THE ROAD AND RAIL
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CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHITTAGONG ON THE COAST AND DACCA AND SYLHET IN THE INTERIOR PASSING WITHIN SIGHT OF THE BOUNDARY. IT WAS HERE, NOT MYMENSINGH-TANGAIL, THAT THE INDIANS COULD POSE THE GREATEST THREAT TO BANGLADESH.

8. I INQUIRED AS TO THE REASONS BEHIND THE INDIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE BANGLADESHI VIEW. MANZUR SAID HE SAW THREE REASONS: (1) INDIA WISHES TO BE IN POSITION TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANY UPHEAVAL IN BANGLADESH TO INSTALL A PUPPET GOVERNMENT HERE; (2) INDIA KEEPS THE PRESENT BANGLADESH GOVERNMENT ON EDGE BY FORCING IT TO DIVERT RESOURCES AND ATTENTION FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TO DEFENSE, AND IT ALSO SIGNALS TO THE BANGLADESHIS THAT IT CAN CREATE TROUBLE AT ANY TIME; AND (3) INDIA MAY BE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM DEEP INVOLVEMENT WITH THESE GROUPS WHICH NOW HAS A HISTORY OF MORE THAN A YEAR AND A HALF.

9. MANZUR THEN TURNED TO THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS AND SAID THAT THE SITUATION THERE HAS DETERIORATED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE PAST EIGHT OR NINE MONTHS. HE DIFFERENTIATED BETWEEN THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN PORTIONS OF THE TRIBAL DISTRICT. IN THE NORTH, HE NOTED, THE GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN HAD PERMITTED THE MIZO NATIONAL FRONT TO OPERATE FROM BASES IN THE TRACTS. NOW BANGLADESH WAS GIVING THESE PEOPLE NO SUPPORT AND WANTED TO REMOVE THEM BUT DID NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES IN THAT DIFFICULT TERRAIN TO DRIVE ALL OF THEM OUT. IN FACT, ADDITIONAL MIZOS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN COMING TO BANGLADESH SINCE 1974 WHEN INDIA AND BURMA BEGAN TO COOPERATE IN ACTION AGAINST THE DISSIDENTS. INDIA WAS SPREADING THE LINE THAT

BANGLADESH WAS SUPPORTING THE MIZOS. THIS, MANZUR AVERRED,
IS TOTALLY UNTRUE. HE SAID SEVERAL CAMPS HAVE BEEN
ESTABLISHED IN THE HILL TRACTS TO TRAIN BANGLADESHI
SECURITY FORCES, WHICH ARE NOT FAMILIAR WITH FIGHTING
IN THIS TYPE OF TERRAIN, BUT MANZUR INSISTED THAT NO
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DISSIDENTS OF ANY NATURE ARE BEING TRAINED OR
SHELTERED AT THESE OR ANY OTHER BDG FACILITIES.

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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R 110710Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3823
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
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10. THE SECOND DOCUMENT MANZUR GAVE ME ALSO DETAILS
ADDITINAL INSURGENT ACTIVITY IN THE NORTHERN PORTION
OF THE HILL TRACTS SPONSORED BY DISAFFECTED TRIBAL
GROUPS. THE LARGEST OF THE GROUPS IN THE SHANTI BAHINI
(PEACE ARMY) WHICH IS COMPRISED PRINCIPALLY OF CHAKMAS.
BANGLADESH SOURCES ARE CONVINCED THAT THIS GROUP IS
RECEIVING ASSISTANCE FROM INDIA. NINE CAMPS HAVE
BEEN IDENTIFIED IN INDIA, INCLUDING THE ONE IN THE

AIJAL AREA.

11. THE DOCUMENT ALSO DETAILS GROUPS IN THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF THE TRACTS. THESE ARE PRINCIPALLY DISSIDENTS OF BURMESE NATIONALITY AND RANGE FROM MUSLIMS FROM ARAKAN TO A SMALL, BUT PESKY, RED FLAG COMMUNIST GROUP. IN READING THE DOCUMENT IT APPARS THAT THESE GROUPS MAY WELL BE MORE IN THE NATURE OF REFUGEES (THE MUSLIMS)

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AND PERHAPS BANDITS (THE RED FLAGGERS). BANGLADESH HAS ASSURED BURMA THAT IT DOES NOT SUPPORT ANY OF THESE GROUPS BUT SO FAR THERE IS NO COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO STEM THEM.

12. THE WRITTEN REPORT PASSED TO ME BY MANZUR NOTES THAT CAPTURED DOCUMENTS AND INTERROGATIONS CLEARLY SHOW "COMPLICITY OF INDIAN INTELLIGENCE AND BORDER SECURITY FORCES IN TRAINING AND ARMING OF THE SHANTI BAHINI." THE REPORT SUMMARIZES THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE HILL TRACTS AS FOLLOWS: "SHANTI BAHINI CONTINUES TO RECEIVE GUIDANCE AND HELP FROM THE INDIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY FORCES FROM ACROSS THE BORDER. WITH THE INDUCTION OF MORE BANGLADESH SECURITY FORCES (INCLUDING ARMY) INTO THE AREA THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE GRADUALLY BEING CONTAINED. THEY HAVE NOW SHIFTED THEIR OPERATION TO INACCESSIBLE AREAS, AND AVOID DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE ARMY. LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN THE SETTLED/POPULATED AREAS HAVE IMPROVED. LACK OF ROAD COMMUNICATION HAMPERS OPERATION OF THE SECURITY FORCES."

13. FINALLY, MANZUR ADDRESSED HIMSELF TO WHAT HE CALLED ANOTHER INDIAN LINE, I.E., THAT CHINA WAS WORKING WITH BANGLADESH TO DESTABILIZE THE BORDER. HE FLATLY DENIED THIS, ADDING THAT BANGLADESH HAS ENOUGH PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN WITHOUT ANNOYING ITS NEIGHBORS.

14. COMMENT: ZIA HAD SUGGESTED A BRIEFING IN MY EARLY MEETINGS WITH HIM AND I HAD INDICATED MY WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT AN INVITATION IF IT WERE EXTENDED. THERE IS NO DOUBT, OF COURSE, THAT THE BRIEFING WAS SUBJECTIVE, ALTHOUGH IN GENERAL TERMS IT ACCORDS WITH INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES.

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Message Attributes

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